



INFORMATION NOTE

Date: 11 July 2005

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Visits Sierra Leone.

Freetown - The United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights, Madam Louise Arbour is scheduled to visit Sierra Leone from July 13-16, 2005 as part of her mission to West Africa. The purpose of her mission is to assess the human rights situation in Sierra Leone with a view to supporting the efforts of the Government and other actors in ensuring the return of durable peace and stability. Ms Arbour will be accompanied by Ms Olatokunbo Ige, Coordinator of the Africa Unit and Mr. Fabrizio Hochschild, Head of Capacity Building and Field Operations Branch, OHCHR.

The Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR) has been present in Sierra Leone since 1998 under the United Nations Observer Mission (UNOMSIL) and since 1999 under the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL). This is the second time in six years that a UN Human Rights Commissioner is visiting Sierra Leone in person. It can be recalled that in 1999, Ms. Mary Robinson visited Sierra and undertook to address the post conflict human rights challenges of the country. Growing out of this commitment, the OHCHR has implemented several human rights projects in Sierra Leone including among others, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).

It is also expected that the visit of the High Commissioner will encourage the Government of Sierra Leone to move ahead with some key outstanding human rights issues including the establishment of the National Human Rights Commission; the constitution of the TRC Follow up Committee and the gradual implementation of the recommendations of the TRC.

During her stay, Madam Arbour will meet with his Excellency Alhaji Dr. Ahmad Tejan Kabbah President of the Republic of Sierra Leone; the Chief Justice; the Speaker and members of Parliament; and key Ministries of government. She will also meet with the SRSG and senior staff of UNAMSIL, ECOWAS and AU representatives accredited near this capital, the UN Country Team, Special Court, and Civil Society Organizations, International NGOS. On Friday, July 15, the High Commissioner will visit amputees and war wounded in Grafton, and thereafter travels to Koidu, Kono district to hold discussions with the local authorities and the human rights community and visit mining sites in the district.

The High Commissioner departs Sierra Leone on Saturday, July 16, 2005.